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STATE SUPERINTENDENT *of* PUBLIC INSTRUCTION  
OKLAHOMA STATE DEPARTMENT *of* EDUCATION

MEMORANDUM

**TO:** Teaching and Learning Consortium  
**FROM:** Carolyn Thompson, Director of Government Affairs  
**DATE:** November 12, 2015  
**SUBJECT:** Interim Study Update

**Oct 22 - School Funding**

Oklahoma's school funding formula was presented as outdated and too complex. It was noted that while many things have changed in education over the last five years, we still fund schools the same we we did then. Many other states are currently taking a look at changing their formulas as well. Moving to a model that is a pure-student based allocation was discussed.

**Oct 22 - #OKHigh5 Teacher Pay Raise**

Shawn Hime from OSSBA presented their teacher shortage to the committee emphasizing that the number of teaching vacancies from their last survey had increased by 200, from 800 to 1,000. Although the focus of the study was on teacher pay, there was also discussion surrounding limited resources and the burden of state and federal mandates. Superintendent Hofmeister presented the #OKHigh5 plan to make Oklahoma regionally competitive. Oklahoma's average pay is only above 3 other states, Idaho, Mississippi and South Dakota.

**Oct 27 - Vision for Education**

The goal of this study was to look at formulating a unified statewide vision for education that can help shape policy decisions in the future. Superintendent Hofmeister presented the first few pieces of the agency's new strategic plan, including mission, vision, values and key strategic objectives. She also used the opportunity to discuss a new system of assessments. Shawn Hime from OSSBA presented their For the People strategic plan and Jennifer Monies from the Oklahoma Educated Workforce Initiative presented the Business Case for Education Reform study stressing that businesses needed to have a seat at the table.

**Oct 27 - Kindergarten Readiness**

Several agencies included Education, Health and Partnership for School Readiness presented on the need for greater preparedness entering both Pre-K and Kindergarten. About 46% of children in Oklahoma are at risk for poor school readiness. It was emphasized that increasing Oklahoma's investment in early childhood development would help curtail remediation and other societal costs in the future. One big challenge to this goal is the inability for state agencies to communicate about data and thus coordinate services.

### **Oct 28 - State-Mandated Assessments and Feasibility of Multiple Diplomas**

One primary topic of discussion at this study was the new microscope nation-wide placed on state mandated assessments. Ability for Oklahoma to save significant testing dollars by moving to administer only those tests that are federally mandated is an option that was presented, as the state is working towards new standards and then soon-to-follow assessments that align with those standards. Options for a different types of diplomas were also discussed, including minimum requirements met, scholars distinction, or workforce distinction. Concerns did arise that students would be held to different sets of standards. OSDE emphasized that there are already many opportunities for student recognition and distinction with the current system of diplomas.

### **Nov 2 - Best Practices in Top States and Countries**

The primary point of discussion among many of the scholars presenting was how different countries treat teachers and the teaching profession. Many countries sacrifice larger class sizes for more professional development and reflection time, treating teachers much like we do college professors in the U.S. Many countries give their teachers the type of autonomy that professions like doctors, architects and lawyer have and are compensated as such. Some evidence from the new Teacher Supply and Demand study was presented showing early career Oklahoma teachers make about 75% of what they could make in another similarly-situated field.

### **Nov 3 - HB 1512 and Understanding the Differences between Interpreters, Para-Professionals and Various Certifications**

This study focused on HB 1512 from last session, which seeks to raise the qualifications for educational interpreters for deaf students. Many expressed concern that there is a lack of qualified and certified interpreters within the state especially in rural areas. However, raising the standards could produce a pool of even fewer interpreters for schools to access. It was expressed that more work is needed to address this problem than simply raising the standards.

### **Nov 4 - Facility Funding and Accountability for Charter Schools**

Much of the study centered around the discussion of facility funding for charter schools to assist with capital needs. Charter schools do not receive ad valorem dollars and are funded solely through the state aid formula leaving many with trouble financing buildings and renovations. SDE provided a general overview of charter schools in Oklahoma, the statutory purposes of the Charter Schools Act, and accountability requirements (application, contract, financial, compliance, and performance). The committee was provided with the charter school accreditation checklist. The Act has expanded the requirements for application from 10 to nearly 40, including 16 statutory requirements for compliance. The Act also includes a closure requirement for those schools performing in the bottom 5% of all schools beginning in the 2016-2017 school year.